

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 82

By Stewart

A RESOLUTION to acknowledge the Historic American Indian
First Nations of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the area that now encompasses the great State of Tennessee was once the homeland and tribal hunting grounds of a number of First Nations People who had great attachment to the land and who staunchly defended their right to live, hunt, and draw nourishment from that land; and

WHEREAS, those same people were decimated by imported diseases, warfare, and continual encroachment upon their land, their livelihood, and their way of life; and

WHEREAS, as their numbers dwindled, their rights were usurped at the whim of foreign governments; and whether by choice, by force, or by treaty, these First Nations were made to give up their natural birthright and move to other lands; and

WHEREAS, although the tribes themselves were moved westward, many individuals managed to remain behind in the lands of their nativity or to return to the lands of their ancestry; and

WHEREAS, the Eastern Ridge and Valley region of the Tennessee River and its tributaries were known to be the home of the Yuchi, the Koasati, and the Tuskegee Tribes in times of earliest contact with the white man; and the evidence of early Muscogee (Creek) occupation in the same region is exhibited by the names of historic Native American towns such as Chattanooga, Tallassee, and Etowah; and

WHEREAS, the Mosopelia established themselves on the Cumberland River and at one or two points on the Tennessee shore of the Mississippi on their way from Ohio to Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the Kaskinampo lived upon the Cumberland River where there is evidence that, upon their first arrival to the Tennessee River, they may have settled for a short time near its mouth; and

WHEREAS, there is also evidence that the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers were known as the Kaskinampo, yet the tribe itself stuck persistently to the Tennessee River until the early eighteenth century when it united with the Koasati; and

WHEREAS, the tribes in this region were later supplanted by the Cherokee, who, in many cases, kept the same town names established by the earlier tribes; the Cherokee went on to establish numerous new towns such as Tellico, Echota, and Settico and claimed all of Middle Tennessee as their territorial hunting ground; and

WHEREAS, after 1729, the Cherokee allowed a band of the Natchez to establish a town in what is now known as Monroe County, in an area that is still known as Notchy Creek; and

WHEREAS, primarily inhabiting York and Lancaster counties of South Carolina, the Catawba extended their settlement into the neighboring State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, portions of the Shawnee once lived in the Cumberland Basin of Tennessee before twice being expelled by an alliance of the Cherokee and Chickasaw; after the formation of the Chickamauga Confederacy, the Shawnees were allowed to establish towns among their newfound allies, leaving a memento of their name in the modern town of Sewanee; and

WHEREAS, during the days of the American Revolution, war chief Dragging Canoe joined with one thousand warriors and their families to separate from the Cherokee Nation in association with the Muscogee (Creek), Choctaw, Natchez, Shawnee, Delaware, Mohawk, and White Tories to form a new band, known by their anglicized name as the "Chickamauga"; and

WHEREAS, together they established the five lower towns of Running Water, Nickajack, Long Island, Crow, and Lookout Mountain in the lower Tennessee and Sequatchie River valleys within Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama; and

WHEREAS, the Chickasaw once occupied the land just north of the southern boundary of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1952, several members of the Choctaw began moving to Lauderdale and Shelby counties in West Tennessee, searching for employment and establishing communities there; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, as a result of the work of the Mississippi band of Choctaws and Choctaw community leaders in Lauderdale County, the federal government purchased 172 acres near Henning and established housing for the Choctaw, allowing them to retain their language and practice many of their customs to this day; and

WHEREAS, many prehistoric Native American sites still exist in the State of Tennessee, including Pinson Mounds, Old Stone Fort, and many lesser-known archaeological sites whose precise links to modern or historical First Nations have yet to be definitively established; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we acknowledge the Historic American Indian First Nations known as the Catawba, Cherokee, Chickamauga, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Kaskinampo, Koasati, Mosopelia, Muscogee (Creek), Natchez, Shawnee, Tuskegee, and Yuchi, who once inhabited much of the State of Tennessee and are valued members of this great State to this day.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.